

her, ferociously and protectively monitoring every detail of her care at every stage. So much so that one of the doctors joked that my father was practicing medicine without a license. Throughout this difficult time, the devotion of my parents to one another was like a shining beacon, drawing everyone to them with its intensity and warmth.

Nearly half a century ago, Father came to America to prepare a place for his young wife and their children. Now, Mother has gone to prepare a place for him and for us—an everlasting home with the Lord that will never end and where every tear will be wiped away. We are consoled by the knowledge that we will see Mother again with her usual smile, healthy and strong.

Until then, Mother is with us every day in our hearts and in our lives as an enduring inspiration, spurring us forward to contribute to society and make a difference in this world.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to engage in a colloquy with my friend the distinguished Senator from Colorado, Mr. KEN SALAZAR, who I have the pleasure of serving with as cochair of the Senate Democratic Hispanic Task Force.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to spend a moment talking about the landmark 1947 discrimination case *Mendez v. Westminster*, which established the legal precedent on which *Brown v. Board of Education* was based. It is an extremely important piece of our civil rights history, but sadly, it is often overlooked. Senator SALAZAR and I would like to remedy that.

Let me illustrate the importance of this case. I want you to picture two students, both equally bright, eager to learn, and full of possibility. One student sits in a beautiful new school building surrounded by the best books, a good heating system, and a clean cafeteria. The other sits in a dilapidated old shed with torn and tattered books that are far too old. The heat doesn't work because there's no furnace, and the cafeteria doesn't exist. As you all know, this was what occurred in towns throughout our country for far too long before *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate was inherently unequal.

Sylvia Mendez, a victim of separate but equal before *Brown v. Board of Education*, was only 8 years old when she and her brothers were prohibited from attending a Whites-only school in Westminster, CA, in Orange County. Her father, along with five other Mexican-American fathers whose children were forced to attend subpar, segregated schools, challenged school segregation in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, claiming their children were victims of unconstitutional discrimination. This historic court battle ultimately ended school segregation in California and set in motion the legal process that would eventually end school segregation in America.

Mr. SALAZAR. Like my colleague Senator BOB MENENDEZ, I believe it is

critical to recognize the contributions that Sylvia Mendez and her family have made to the advancement of civil rights. The Mendez family's struggle for equality is a reminder to me that we must continue to fight for equal and quality education for all our children.

Sadly, many young Hispanic students today attend schools that are lacking in resources, equipment, and highly qualified teachers. Nationally, Latinos are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their White counterparts and only 1 in 10 Latinos has obtained a 4-year college degree. Reforms to our education system are clearly needed to address these disparities and continue the legacy of Sylvia Menendez.

Education is a critical pathway to realizing the American dream. It is what allows every child to transcend the barriers of race, class, background, or disability to achieve their potential to be what they choose in life. A wise historian once said that, "Education is the means by which we exult our successes and remedy our failures and the process by which we transmit our civilization from one generation to the next."

We take this moment to recommit ourselves to uphold the legacy of Sylvia Mendez and her brothers. This is what Hispanic Heritage Month is all about.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I thank Senator KEN SALAZAR for the work he does on the Senate Democratic Hispanic Task Force on behalf of Latinos. My colleague understands, like I do, that we must not only celebrate the accomplishments of Latinos but turn to the future in to ensure that Latinos are protected by our laws and able to achieve the American dream. Sylvia Mendez, who has become a premier civil rights advocate and leader as a result of this case, is a clear example of what it means to achieve that dream.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING LOUISE SEIKEL

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which I am honored to chair, oversees the Department of Veterans Affairs, the second largest Cabinet level department in the United States. A person who works for Veterans Affairs is joined by roughly 245,000 fellow employees, each of whom plays a role in fulfilling our Nation's obligation to those who have served. In an organization of that magnitude, there is a real risk of overlooking the importance of the contributions made by individual VA employees. Today I want to recognize one such employee, who celebrated her 50th year of working for veterans this past Sunday.

Louise Seikel, a certified registered nurse anesthetist in Brooklyn, NY, has spent the last half century serving those who have served our country. To

put this into perspective, I note that Louise has done this under 10 U.S. Presidents, and had provided care to veterans for over three decades before the first Secretary of Veterans' Affairs was appointed to the President's Cabinet. When she began, she and her colleagues cared for wounded warriors who were born in the 19th century, and today she is part of the health administration caring for those wounded in the conflicts of the 21st century.

Louise has served countless numbers of veterans, and I cannot put into words the immeasurable impact she has made. What I can do, however understated it may be, is give her my heartfelt thanks. Louise has earned it.

In that spirit I say to Louise Seikel, on behalf of every life you have touched and the grateful Nation you continue to serve, mahalo nui loa. Thank you so very much for your public service.●

IN RECOGNITION OF JANET TURCOTTE

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize one of my constituents, Janet Turcotte of Bowie, Maryland. I was fortunate to meet Janet in March of this year when she visited my Washington office. She came as part of C3, the Colorectal Cancer Coalition, a group whose mission is to eliminate suffering and death due to colorectal cancer.

Janet is a talented embroiderer, and for more than 20 years she has been decorating saddlecloths for the thoroughbreds at Maryland's Pimlico Race Course. For the past 2 years, she has added the colorectal cancer "Blue Star of Hope" to the saddlecloths of the contenders for the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico. Recognizing that the Preakness has more than 17 million television viewers each year, Janet aims to use this symbol to encourage early screening for colorectal cancer, and to save lives. Janet graciously brought me one of those "Blue Star" saddlecloths, which is now displayed in my personal office.

Janet Turcotte is far more than an advocate for colorectal health. She is also a patient. First diagnosed with stage IV colorectal cancer 4 years ago, she is currently battling her third recurrence of the disease. Last week, Janet's doctors told her that she does not have much time left.

Janet's message to Congress and to all Americans is an urgent and important one. It is that early screening, diagnosis and treatment of colon cancer can save lives. The American Cancer Society, whose members will visit Capitol Hill soon, reports that in 2006, more than 150,000 new cases of colon cancer were diagnosed and more than 50,000 Americans died from the disease, including more than 1,000 Marylanders.

I ask my colleagues to join me in extending our appreciation to Janet Turcotte, a dedicated and courageous advocate for colorectal health, for her